

## Department of Veterans Affairs

## § 1.552

Activity	Fees
(vii) Providing files under court subpoena .....	Actual direct cost to the Agency.

(NOTE.— If VA regularly contracts for duplicating services related to providing the requested records, such as the duplication of microfilm or architect's plans and drawings, the contractor fees may be included in the actual direct cost to the Agency)

(2) *Benefit records.* When VA benefit records are requested by a VA beneficiary or applicant for VA benefits, the duplication fee for one complete set of such records will be waived.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5702(b))

(j) If the copy is to be transmitted by certified or registered mail, airmail, or special delivery mail, the postal fees therefor shall be added to the other fees provided in paragraph (i) of this section (or the order must include postage stamps or stamped return envelopes for the purpose).

(k) Those Department of Veterans Affairs installations not having copying equipment are authorized to arrange with the nearest Department of Veterans Affairs installation having such equipment to make the necessary authorized copies of records or documents.

(l) Administration, staff office, and field facility heads are authorized to designate employees to certify copies of records and papers furnished under the provisions of paragraph (a) of this section.

[19 FR 3224, June 2, 1954, as amended at 32 FR 10850, July 25, 1967; 33 FR 9342, June 26, 1968; 35 FR 20001, Dec. 31, 1970; 37 FR 2676, Feb. 4, 1972; 39 FR 3938, Jan. 31, 1974; 53 FR 10376, Mar. 31, 1988; 54 FR 34980, Aug. 23, 1989]

### § 1.527 Administrative review.

(a) Any person may, in the event of a denial of his or her request to inspect or obtain information from or copies of records within the purview of §§1.501 through 1.526, appeal such denial. Such appeal, stating the circumstances of the denial, should be addressed, as appropriate, to the field facility, administration, or staff office head.

(b) A denial action not reversed by a field facility, administration, or staff office head on appeal, will be referred through normal channels to the General Counsel.

(c) The final agency decision in such appeals will be made by the General

Counsel or the Deputy General Counsel.

[32 FR 10850, July 25, 1967, as amended at 55 FR 21546, May 25, 1990]

### RELEASE OF INFORMATION FROM DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RECORDS OTHER THAN CLAIMANT RECORDS

NOTE: Sections 1.550 through 1.559 concern the availability and release of information from files, records, reports, and other papers and documents in Department of Veterans Affairs custody other than those pertaining to claims under any of the laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. As to the release of information from Department of Veterans Affairs claimant records, see §§1.500 through 1.527. Section 1.550 series implement the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552.

[40 FR 12656, Mar. 20, 1975]

AUTHORITY: Sections 1.550 to 1.559 issued under 72 Stat. 1114; 38 U.S.C. 501.

### § 1.550 General.

The Department of Veterans Affairs policy is one of disclosure of information from agency records to the extent permitted by law. This includes the release of information which the Department of Veterans Affairs is authorized to withhold under 5 U.S.C. 552(b) (see §1.554) if it is determined: (a) By the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Deputy Secretary that disclosure of such information will serve a useful purpose or (b) by an administration, staff office, or field facility head or designee under §1.556(a) that disclosure will not adversely affect the proper conduct of official business or constitute an invasion of personal privacy.

[40 FR 12656, Mar. 20, 1975]

### § 1.551 [Reserved]

### § 1.552 Public access to information that affects the public when not published in the Federal Register as constructive notice.

(a) All final orders in such actions as entertained by the Contract Appeals Board, those statements of policy and

## § 1.553

interpretations adopted by the Department of Veterans Affairs but not published in the FEDERAL REGISTER, and administrative manuals and staff instructions that affect any member of the public, unless promptly published and copies offered for sale, will be kept currently indexed by the office of primary program responsibility or the Manager, Administrative Services, as determined by the Secretary or designee. Such index or indexes or supplements thereto will be promptly published, quarterly or more frequently, and distributed (by sale or otherwise) unless the Department of Veterans Affairs determines by order published in the FEDERAL REGISTER that publication would be unnecessary and impracticable, in which case the Department of Veterans Affairs will nonetheless provide copies of such index or indexes or supplements thereto on request at a cost not to exceed the direct cost of duplication. Both the index and the materials indexed as required by this paragraph will be made available to the public, for inspection and copying. Public reading facilities for this purpose will be maintained in Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office and Department of Veterans Affairs field facilities, open to the public during the normal duty hours of the office in which located. Orders made in the adjudication of individual claims under laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs are confidential and privileged by statute (38 U.S.C. 5701) and so are exempt from this requirement.

(b) The voting records of the Contract Appeals Board will be maintained in a public reading facility in the Office of the Board in Central Office and made available to the public upon request.

(c) When publishing or making available to the public any opinion, order, statement of policy, interpretation, staff manual or instruction to staff, identifying details will be deleted, and the deletion justified in writing, to the extent required to prevent a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

(d) No final order, opinion, statement of policy, interpretation, staff manual or instruction which is issued, adopted, or promulgated after July 4, 1967, that

## 38 CFR Ch. I (7-1-00 Edition)

affects any member of the public may be relied upon, used, or cited as precedent against any private party unless it has been indexed and either made available or published as provided in this section or unless that private party shall have actual and timely notice of the terms thereof.

[32 FR 10850, July 25, 1967, as amended at 40 FR 12657, Mar. 20, 1975]

### § 1.553 Public access to other reasonably described records.

(a) Except for requests for records which are processed under §§1.551 and 1.552 of this part, unless otherwise provided for in title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, all requests for records shall be processed under paragraph (b) of this section, as well as under any other VA law or regulation governing access to or confidentiality of records or information. Records or information customarily furnished to the public in the regular course of the performance of official duties may be furnished to the public without reference to paragraph (b) of this section. To the extent permitted by other laws and regulations, VA will also consider making available records which it is permitted to withhold under the FOIA if it determines that such disclosure could be in the public interest.

(b) Reasonably described records in VA custody, or copies thereof, other than records made available to the public under provisions of §§1.551 and 1.552 of this part, or unless otherwise provided for in title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, requested in accordance with published rules stating the time, place, fees (if any), and procedures to be followed, will be made promptly available, except as provided in §1.554 of this part, to any person upon request. Such request must be in writing, over the signature of the requester and must contain a reasonable description of the record desired so that it may be located with relative ease. The request should be made to the office concerned (having jurisdiction of the record desired) or, if not known, to the Director or Veterans Services Officer in the nearest VA regional office; the Director, or Chief, Medical Administration Service, or other responsible official of